

No Recruiter Left Behind

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No Recruiter Left Behind
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to
Major G. S. Benson, CG 14
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Introduction

As United States armed forces are committed to fight the Global War on Terrorism in both Afghanistan and Iraq, military recruiters are engaged in a home front battle to win the hearts and minds of high school and college students, parents, and school administrators in order to fill the ranks of both the active and reserve components of the armed forces. The federal No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, included a provision, Section 9528, giving military recruiters access to students and student directories in order to aid the military in its recruiting effort. However, the law has recently been cited as a lightning rod for opposition to military recruiting efforts. In order to re-gain momentum in the military recruiting effort, recruiters should seek ways to counter the challenges presented by anti-war sentiment and concerns over student privacy that have been created by the federal NCLB Act.

Background:

Prior to the NCLB Act, which was signed into law in 2002, military recruiters were successful in reaching their assigned enlistment goals without the aid of mandatory access granted under NCLB. According to Lt. Col. Ellen Krenke, a spokeswoman for the Department of Defense, "for

many years the vast majority of public schools (88 percent) have allowed military recruiters access to student phone numbers and addresses".¹ This cooperation between school officials and recruiters can be attributed to the many programs that military recruiters implement in an effort to gain the trust of the students, faculty, and staff of their assigned schools. According to David Goodman, "In 1999 recruiters were denied access to schools on 19,228 occasions. Goodman added "Rep. David Vitter, R-La. Sponsored NCLB, Section 9528, because he objected to high schools being able to deny a recruiter access to its students".² Section 9528 of the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, titled "Armed Forces Recruiter Access to Students and Student Recruiting Information," essentially allows military recruiters lawful access to high school students names', addresses, and telephone numbers. In addition to student directory information, military recruiters are also permitted to have the "same access to students" as is generally given to colleges and universities and corporate employers who seek to enlist high school students into the workforce by actively recruiting on high school campuses. According to the law, school administrators must inform parents of their rights, and students and parents who object to the release of

student information can inform their school administrators in writing and have their respective names withheld from lists given to military recruiters. Schools that fail to comply with the provisions of the federal NCLB Act may be subjected to the loss of federal funds.³

Anti-war Sentiment and Backlash to NCLB

Peace groups and "counter-recruiters", one of a small but growing number of opponents of the Iraq war who say they want to compete with military recruiters for the hearts and minds of young people,⁴ are at the very forefront of opposition to the United States' current military actions in Iraq and Afghanistan. They perceive the loss of life of America's young people involved in actions both at home and abroad as senseless.

Subsequently, they successfully focused their efforts on creating public awareness to laws like the federal NCLB act, which members of these groups perceive to be the government's way of giving military recruiters a means to target impressionable high school students and to manipulate them into enlisting into the armed forces. Nation-wide protests, student and teacher sit-ins, and counter-recruiter websites have been the primary efforts put forth to gain national media attention and to speak out against the war and the military's recruiting efforts.

Infact, the Marine Corps and the Army have seen notable decreases in enlistment contracts written for fiscal year 2005. According to Neal Karlinsky, "the military has had a tough time meeting recruiting targets. The Army has achieved only 92 percent of its goal. The Army National Guard, 80 percent. The Army Reserve, 84 percent".⁵ The Marine Corps, which measure success of recruiting in number of recruits shipped to boot camp instead of the number of recruits contracted, has maintained that the Marines have met their targeted recruiting goal despite a decrease in contracts written for the fiscal year 2005.

In order to counter the arguments raised by peace groups and counter-recruiters, military recruiters should continue to focus on the recruiting training that they give/provide recruiters in order to continue prospecting for the most highly qualified young and women to join the military. As evidenced in the number of recruits shipped to boot camp versus the number contracted, a pool of motivated youth do exist. Infact, the increased numbers of parents and students that are invoking their right to "opt-out"⁶ of the provisions of the NCLB act and to have their information withheld from being released to recruiters should be viewed as a positive force multiplier for

recruiters. Naturally, recruiters would like to have access to 100 percent of the student population, but their likelihood of reaching students that do have an interest in the military is only increased when students who are against the war or against the presence of the military in their schools voluntarily remove their names from their respective school directories. This benefits the military by reducing the number of man-hours applied to cold-calling students that remain on the list by reducing the amount of money that is spent on postage for mass mailings of costly recruiting-related printed materials sent to student addresses.

Concerns for Student Privacy

In addition to the peace/anti-war and parents groups, chapters of the American Civil Liberties Union have opposed the NCLB as a violation of student privacy. According to Oskar Castro, director of the National Youth and Militarism Project of the American Friends Service Committee, a Quaker organization, "We don't like the law. But it exists, and it should exist with all the necessary protections for protecting students' privacy."⁷ These groups believe that the schools are overburdened with the responsibility to inform parents of their rights and that the information about the release of student data is often buried in a

school website, letter, or flyer that is sent to parents at the start of a new academic year. Castro states, "Many parents learn of it only when a recruiter calls their sons or daughters at home."⁸

In response to the concerns over privacy, U.S. Representative Mike Honda, Democrat, San Jose, California, has introduced a bill that would, in contrast to the current policy, require schools to get parents' consent to have them opt-in/agree to release student information to military recruiters. According to Honda, "while I support the right of the armed services to recruit high school students, I don't believe successful military recruitment efforts require access to students' personal information without their consent."⁹

Although, some individuals and groups disagree with NCLB, many people believe that the military is a viable option for many students and that the military should have the same access to the student market that high schools typically give colleges and universities. Congressman David Vitter, Republican, Louisiana, sponsored the amendment to NCLB that allows college recruiters access to student directory information. According to Vitter, military recruiters, who offer college scholarships and jobs, deserved to be on par with college recruiters."¹⁰ The

amendment continues to place the responsibility on educators to adhere to the rules and to inform parents of their option/right to have their child opt-out of the student directory given to military recruiters, but there are many people who contend it is a small price to pay for the schools and students who benefit from the education reform, and federal dollars that stem from NCLB -- not to mention the contributions made to the military's effort to recruit a highly capable and professional all-volunteer force.

According to David S.C. Chu, Undersecretary for personnel and readiness, U.S. Department of Defense, "DoD understands privacy concerns and allows only limited use of collected data. We don't give these lists out to other people ...the data is given only to the military recruiters".¹¹ Chu further states, "Maintaining lists of potential recruits is critical to the success of an armed force that doesn't rely on conscription ...if we don't want conscription, you have to give the DoD, the military services, an avenue to contact young people to tell them what is being offered."¹² The lists are a good source of information for contacting potential recruits and are often the most efficient way of contacting students either by phone or mail. However, the most effective way for

recruiters to meet their assigned missions and counter the arguments against privacy concerns is by becoming a physical presence in their schools and less dependent on school lists. A physical presence creates a more positive impression and makes recruiters accessible to answer questions personally about the military and to be a first-hand account or true-life testimony.

Conclusion

In order to decrease resentment of the NCLB and reduce privacy concerns, the Marine Corps should instead focus on increasing the physical presence on campus and limit the use of cold-calls utilizing student directory information. Recruiting is challenging enough without dealing with the backlash and resentment that NCLB, Section 9528, has created. Therefore, it is imperative that the Marine Corps continue to demonstrate the ability to serve as a military organization that can adapt to societal changes and pressures and provide the United States with a highly effective fighting force. The Marine Corps proudly states that they are "the few, the proud", but the "proud to be few" still needs help in leaving the door open to those who desire to serve as a Marine. NCLB, as is it is written, provides the Marine Corps with the opening needed to recruit young people.

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¹ Lori Aratani, "Military Faces Parental Counterattack, High School Recruitment, a Longtime Tradition, Raises Worries in Wartime", *Washington Post News Paper on the Web*, 1 November 2005, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/10/31/AR2005103101834.html>> (1 November 2005). Paragraph 12.

² David Goodman, "Covertly Recruiting Kids", *Baltimore Sun on the Web*, 29 September 2003, <<http://www.baltimoresun.com/news/opinion/oped/bal-op.recruiting29sep29,0,3322006.story>> (29 September 2003). Paragraph 11.

³ U.S. Department of Education Website <<http://www.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg112.html#sec9528>>

⁴ Rick Hampson, "'Counter-recruiters' Shadowing the Military", *USA Today on the Web*, 7 March 2005, <http://www.usatoday.com/news/nation/2005-03-07-counter-recruiters_x.htm> (7 March 2005). Paragraph 2.

⁵ Neal Karlinsky, "Parents Battle at High School, Parents Oppose No Child Left Behind Provision Requiring Access for Recruiters", *ABC News Internet Ventures*, 25 October 2005, <<http://www.abcnews.go.com/nightline/iraqcoverage/story?id=1258600>> (30 October 2005). Paragraph 11.

⁶ Goodman, "Covertly Recruiting Kids" Paragraph 6.

⁷ Karen MacPherson, "Parents Resist Military Recruiting in Schools", *Post-Gazette National Bureau on the Web*, 13 June 2005, <<http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/o5164/520796.stm>> (13 June 2005). Paragraph 6.

⁸ MacPherson, "Parents Resist" Paragraph 8.

⁹ MacPherson, "Parents Resist" Paragraph 18.

¹⁰ Elaine Rivera, "Military Recruiting Law Puts Burden on Parents", *Washington Post News Paper on the Web*, 24 November 2002, <http://www.wagingpeace.org/articles/2002/11/24_rivera_recruiting-law.htm> (24 November 2002). Paragraph 15.

¹¹ Kathleen Rhem, "Potential Recruits List Critical to 'All-Recruited' Force", *American Forces Press Service on the Web*, 24 June 2005, <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/Jun2005/20050624_1834.html> (24 June 2005). Paragraph 5.

¹² Rhem, "Potential Recruits" Paragraph 11.

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